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# OUTPOSTS

EDITED BY HOWARD SERGEANT

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DANNIE ABSE

*The Occupation*

AFTER leaves yellowing in October at the end of their green interruption, the winter soldiers come, and my brothers line the pavement weeping yellow tears, yellow feet tramp through streets blown by wind to harbour. Trees dumb, they stand my brothers in the spidery lame sun, half entangled with the earth, sorrowfully, silently to witness the winter soldiers come. I have an affinity with trees. Like thieves at noon they came, like dew at eventide they came, grey faces under grey helmets. Whose yellow hair stirs on the ground dead in the wind? Whose gangrenous foreheads in the square, in this month of eyes turned red? And so many friends that are friends no more and so many enemies that were not enemies before.

Now the winter soldiers come through the October streets carrying nascent snow and the cold in their haversacks. Memory of sunlit days in the abbatoirs of the heart! Memory of five ghosts coming alive in the dead hand's cunning! So my children retreat to the South, the swallows asleep on the wing over ravaged cornfields, chrysanthemums withering into the South. Go, go to safety my children and return, return with allies from the South—and so many songs that will be sung as before, and so many voices that will sing no more—but return when the tulips sound their signal through red purple trumpets on the stage of April's bright pageant, when the frail ballet dancers, the daffodils, tiptoe on their thin green legs into our homes again, when they glide in yellow ballet skirts blown, across the green décor of Spring's triumphant choreography. Go my children.

The gates of October close,—and so many exiles that will be exiled as before, and so many, so many homes that will be homes no more. Gone the flowers, gone birds, gone leaves to the South, aerial or subterranean exile, gone, departed. Dust in the heart, cinders in the sky.

Days of absence. The winter soldiers ride from the North  
down from mountains even into the trees. I have  
an affinity with trees. So they bite the wafered apples  
with frozen teeth. Beyond the Capital they explode  
the pagan fog guns of November—and so many dreams  
that will be dreamt no more, and so many dead  
that were not dead before. Beyond the Capital fly  
their airships of clouds ready with detonations of snow.  
Even as the procession follows tombs of flowers, fruit, leaves,  
into the heaving earth, they send over their clouds,  
and frost settles in the square where statues stare  
sorrowfully, cough silently. The October gates are closed:  
the winter soldiers break down the wires of sunlight, seal  
the secret ponds with lids of ice, dissemble the red sun.

Resigned, emotionless, the General clammers over raw stones,  
fog following him like a shadow, camouflaging the fields,  
haystacks, trees, with wreaths of smoke—camps under  
a tent of silence, snuffs out the obsequious stars.  
—And so many lovers that are loved no more  
and so many others that will be loved never. . . .

## MICHAEL HAMBURGER

### *Visitors*

**R**ENOUNCING dignity, can the inquisitive dead  
Prowl through nocturnal streets and lurk in corners,  
Into the vacuum of their being suck our souls?  
And cling to me on the margin of sleep,  
Colder their eyes than pebbles on moonlit shores,  
Caves of negation.

We were here before you, they whisper, once;  
But less than a memory at the most  
Throughout my waking they walk at my side  
Was our presence here.  
Do the sloping floorboards you stand on record  
Whose were the dying feet that wore them down?



Still nightly the same clocks chime  
But the ears they chimed for are choked.  
Still the moonbeams make love to the Gothic towers,  
Beauty we toiled to fashion with aching hands,  
Beauty we bore in our spirits  
Till, delivered, it laughed at our labours,  
Denied it had ever been ours.  
Now, briefly, we feed on your pride, our brother to be :

Soon, already, dawn and the servant will stir  
To erase for ever  
Your body's imprint from the more lasting bed.

## SYDNEY TREMAYNE

### *The Return*

I SHALL meet no one in these streets  
Who knows me or will ever know.  
I have come sidling like a crow  
That both approaches and retreats,  
Seizes a morsel and lets go.

There is too much of me beneath  
These paving stones to rive up now.  
Bang went that saxpence long ago  
And it is late to lay a wreath;  
The mood is nonsense anyhow.

The eye remembers. Through the eye  
Of all my ages back to three  
The dreams look down into the sea.  
Aware of sea, aware of sky  
And the gulls' crying wasting me.

Needing detachment from this place  
Return was best. It is the slow  
Seepage of boredom makes me low,  
The small rain on the sabbath face.  
One face is gone, but others grow.

GEOFFREY HOLLOWAY

*Waterloo Bridge*

BETWEEN the last stone, the formal consecration,  
Valkyrian they set their flying face—  
A race of swans, in constellation bearing  
Out of Time's thunderheads miraculous down.

To their fall as if snow-shared the river gave.  
Where they slept, like tents on melting wounds  
Their dream torsos impossibly hung,  
Their polar deference amazed.

Deception : from that night's warm hold  
Slipped columns, beaks of dawn;  
From that turncoat flood a salt light,—  
An embattled hissing chastity, outshone.

They stretched, they would have gone—  
Then, distantly between,  
Hint of a drowned city's foundlings  
Held on the upstroke, their wings.

MADGE HALES

*The White Wood*

SNOW spoke silence in the clearing  
Where tree arms somnolent waited  
the winter sun's warm weeping :

warm to wet only the topmost tip  
of weathered teasle, gaunt parsley  
or the long hook of ash whip;

and on a bough five dead birds  
petrified the snow and the oblique sun  
darkened there knowing no dumb words

to re-kindle cold song, or make  
the fawn stoat curled in the cleft  
of birch bough once more wake.

Cruelty was there in winter's hold  
and death, yet the wood was a white fable  
and the splashed sun a fleece of gold.

## JAMES LAUGHLIN

### *The Voices*

**I**T is sin it is sin it is a  
deadly sin whines the tired  
old voice in

the back of his head you'll  
take her love but you can't  
give yourself

it will end in misery and end  
in remorse it is sin whines  
the tired old

voice it is love it is love  
sings the voice in the heart  
you will bring

her a happiness she has never  
known before you'll bring her  
to live and

she'll burn with love's won-  
derful fire but it's sin no  
it's love cry

the voices together and sadly  
and happily madly he enters  
again the soft  
and delectable  
battle of Love.



NORMAN NICHOLSON

*Rising Five*

I'M rising five,' he said,  
'Not four,' and little coils of hair  
Un-clicked themselves upon his head.  
His spectacles, brimful of eyes to stare  
At me and the meadow, reflected cones of light  
Above his toffee-buckled cheeks. He'd been alive  
Fifty-six months or perhaps a week more :

not four,

But rising five.

Around him in the field the cells of spring  
Bubbled and doubled; buds unbuttoned; shoot  
And stem shook out the creases from their frills,  
And every tree was swilled with green.  
It was the season after blossoming.  
Before the forming of the fruit :

not May,

But rising June.

And in the sky  
The dust dissected the tangential light :

not day,

But rising night;

not now,

But rising soon.

The new buds push the old leaves from the bough.  
We drop our youth behind us like a boy  
Throwing away his toffee wrappers. We never see the flower,  
But only the fruit in the flower; never the fruit,  
But only the rot in the fruit. We look for the marriage bed  
In the baby's cradle, we look for the grave in the bed :

not living,

But rising dead.



R. S. THOMAS

*The Scapegoat*

NO offence, friend! It was the earth did it.  
Adam had Eve to blame, I blame the earth,  
This brown bitch fawning about my feet.  
My skin was a lily once like yours  
Before she smirched it with her dirty ways,  
Blasting its petals with her cruel frost.  
O, I would have had the deft tongue  
To balance words with the precision  
Of a clean stream fingering stones;  
But what could I do? She dragged me down,  
Slurring my gait first, then my speech.  
I never loved her, there's no ring  
Binding us; but it's too late now.  
I am branded upon the brow  
With muck, as though I were her slave.  
My clothes stink where she has pressed  
Her body to me, the lewd bawd,  
Gravid as an old sow, but clawed.

ERIC NIXON

*St. John of the Cross: Toledo*

DARK within and dark without  
a cupboard doom  
to salt his doubt  
fettered in a stinking room  
  
water and crusts upon the floor  
a circle of hate  
and blows he kindly bore  
bent beneath his fate,  
  
crosses of grievous blows—  
these disciplines  
and other torments, woes,  
yet still he shines

and finds his dark a light  
to burn the winter of his cell  
and takes in from the night  
a lover's voice to purge his hell.

The doors are open to his voice,  
his dreaming self is free.  
Oh now he can rejoice  
and plot his liberty.

The night which held him there  
will hide his frailty.  
Under the Virgin's care  
he climbs beyond anxiety.

## ARTHUR S. BOURINOT

### *Brief*

**B**RIEF is the life of man,  
Brief is his mortal span.

Short is his time on earth,  
Death's but a step from birth.

Narrow the path between  
What is and what has been.

Where does man's journey end?  
Beyond the road's last bend,

A place unknown, unseen,  
No living man has been,

Whence no one has returned  
To tell what he has learned.

Brief as a candle's light  
So is man's life in flight.

## HAROLD SILVER

### *Lighthouse Point: Mallorca*

" *People, I have loved you. . .*"—Fucik, 'Report from the Gallows'.

THE sea like the fate of a people is calm in the distance,  
deep-blue silence, punctured twice  
by a sail with a white lost movement  
wandering out of human depth  
modelled by the wind,  
and a ship, able-bodied,  
going, less like a truant in deceptive spaces.  
The sea like the fate of this people  
is a sheet, ripped and ragged at the hem.  
The waves break and belong to the land with a strong, easy blow.

The hills behind are friendly, rising eagerly to peaks;  
they speak in musical tones, stutter benedictions,  
hide a roof or a garden, distort a terraced grove.  
The shadows at evening make optical gestures  
or stand erect, thin paper backcloths.  
Like a people, the hills have a calm foreshortened distance.  
The hills, like this people, touch our skin.  
We step with care on the cragged stones,  
the hills which end at our feet.

We meet the men from the village as we walk down,  
down into the land where the sun calls close to the day.  
This island, this people, this thing caught in a mould,  
stretches out in the mind a map of ambiguous colour,  
then dissolves and breaks, a colossal wave,  
thudding into the eyes and laying pointed rocks  
at the back of the brain.  
The people suddenly stand before us.  
We meet history at dusk  
treading swiftly over the stones towards us.



EWART MILNE

*World in a Smile*

**B**EFORE you smiled I was happy in my garden,  
I pruned and dug and planted and the world was not my care.  
The world was very far and the sun was in the rockpool.  
Before you smiled the quiet earth was near.

When you smiled the world came in my garden,  
Came rushing with its street shout, its challenge and its care,  
When you smiled the sun burnt up the rockpool  
And the long nights fell on the antlers of desire.

Since you smiled the quiet earth's a cockpit,  
The world shouts on my back with its challenge and its care,  
And I cannot plant my garden or enter or go near it  
For the blinding dust that greets me and the scalding wind of fire.

JAMES BROCKWAY

*Adam*

**T**RAPPED between the crib, the grave,  
he is a slave to phantom Time,  
in whose false imagery he sees  
Life a finite pantomime.

Yet what has been has still to be,  
what is has been, shall be again :  
each tired and turning century  
repeats the tale for mice, for men.

Imprisoned in the skeleton,  
he's tricked by insularity :  
would stamp his island form upon  
the continent, reality.

Yet can he say where 'I' begins  
and leaves off being other things?  
Dead men wrangle in his veins  
and in his loins the future sings.

And in Eve's eyes himself he'll see,  
the present and the next remove :  
the man he is, has yet to be,  
clinched in the mirror of her love.

Like Time, half-fact, half-phantom, he  
moves through minds and memories  
and has no true identity :  
is never the man he thinks he is.

## MAURICE WILLOWS

### *Popular Song*

THOSE who anchor their souls to bric-a-brac  
And pictures of Boer War Heroes—  
What will they do when the statues dance  
On the mantelpiece and the violet light  
Expands in all directions?  
Will they 'phone for the doctor, the plumber, the priest?  
Or call on the name of the five-horned beast?  
Or look up the train connections?

Those who support their windy paunches  
On credits and floating loans,  
What will they do when the clock strikes twelve  
To strike no more, and the marble floor  
Dissolves in a dull grey ash?  
Will they charter a plane for their villa in Cannes?  
Or dance like children on summer sands?  
Or pilfer the petty cash?

Those who can hear the ticking of the clock,  
And know the hour of sharp alarum,  
What will they do when the sunlight fades,  
And the lovers under the oak tree's shade  
Turn round in sharp surprise?  
Will they go religious and all forlorn,  
Found a new cult, or watch the dawn  
Explode with wondering eyes?

## HARDIMAN SCOTT

### *Homage to Aphrodite*

Excavations have begun in the ruins of the ancient shrine of Aphrodite at Kouklia village, near Paphos. Erected between 1600 and 1050 B.C., it has been deserted and in ruins since the fourth century A.D.—Newspaper report.

WHO do they hope to find,  
Digging and poking in the ruins?  
A shell—the fossilled scum  
Of the world, or the dried and hard rind  
Of your ear, dead to sins  
And hopeless implorations that come  
Faint as breath over sixteen centuries,  
Or winds in the spray of the birth-rung seas?

What do they hope for—bloom  
Of anemone, frail mark of one  
Faithless love, or the blind  
Boastful eye of Anchises to loom  
Like a jewel the sun  
Has never struck or burnished, then find  
In its sightless stone bright adoration,  
The fixed stare of death and consummation?

Or is this how they hope  
To put a girdle about the earth,  
Unworshipped in Paphos,  
To pick and probe the fragments and grope  
Again towards your birth?  
No, they're not interested in their loss,  
But in writing dates on the foundered stones,  
Build the skeleton of history's bones.

But I would strew your shrine  
With myrtle and blossom of apple  
And rose, who for sixteen  
Hundreds of years have lain without a sign  
Or lover to compel  
Your blood to love again and make green  
The world, the new world that in Paphos died,  
Buried you in ruin and tombs of pride.



LOUIS JOHNSON

*A Ma Femme Premiere*

YOU, my didactic bride, who meaning taught,  
seemed such experience could not be known  
singly or in time when hours were fraught  
utter with multi-menace, but have shown  
pity in its own grave may speak and come  
clear through its hate and strike with grieving dumb.

And is forgiven and at last is known  
at time when, singly, I may see it all  
in such perspective that the game be shown  
without persistent terror, and acquittal  
falls easy from unseeing eyes, the shame  
of opening on such love weeps like a distant flame.

Now there is light enough to see that bed  
where, naked, newly come, were lovers held  
tenuous and shocked as time assaulted  
their dying flesh through each, and struck and felled  
down as two trees across each other's bole,  
deserted children over whom the whimpering leaves fall.

Night, like a candle spent, and love  
a memory of the wax-white loin and long  
lip-kissing; time out of the thriving breast would heave  
the ravished boy, and broken with a song  
find free only the word that would be will to die  
and that a wish unanswered, and the rest agony.

Distant and poles apart at last the hand  
from stolen lust drops peace. A feather falls  
or a flame wakes : the night will understand  
how in the dark will flourish the dream that appals  
in the past of crazy blood, and the even idiot know  
that the hand had found its pattern, did what it had to do.

## REVIEWS

*Achievement in American Poetry* : Louise Bogan, \$2.50.

*Ezra Pound and The Cantos* : Harold H. Watts, \$2.75.

(both published by Henry Regnery Company, U.S.A.).

AT the beginning of the twentieth century "the weight of British Victorian tradition lay heavily upon American poets in general," observes Miss Louise Bogan in the opening chapter of her *Achievement in American Poetry*, which in itself is quite an achievement. Much has happened on the other side of the Atlantic during the last fifty years and Miss Bogan's volume provides a valuable and concise summary — possibly of more value to the English than to the American reader—together with a brief account of the work of the most outstanding poets of the period.

About the same time that the Georgian movement was being set up in England a poetic renaissance was taking place in America which was to have repercussions far greater than those who took part in it ever anticipated. Ezra Pound, who had left his native America a few years earlier, was in England and for a time acted as a link between the two countries, and as critic and agent for several poets (among whom were Aldington, Yeats and Eliot). We may already be well acquainted with the developments here from that time forward, but are singularly ignorant of the progress made in America by Hart Crane, John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, Marianne Moore, Archibald MacLeish, Muriel Rukeyser, Randall Jarrell, Karl Shapiro, Theodore Roethke and others. In the last thirty pages of this book an attempt has been made to give a representative selection of the poems of the period, but obviously the space is far too limited for the purpose. Miss Bogan would have been better advised to continue her examination of the younger poets such as Peter Viereck and to deal with some of those she has not been able to mention as it is.

*Ezra Pound and The Cantos* is well up to the high standard of American criticism. For those readers who regard *The Cantos* as the perfect example of modern obscurity, this volume, with its scrupulous attention to the text, its objective approach and balanced judgment, will prove a reliable guide. Mr. Watts demonstrates that Pound's method of presentation, whether successful or not, is a "calculated assault on indurated modern sensibility that an orderly

attack (cultural histories, analyses of Western thought) leaves unaltered." The last chapter, *Reckoning*, is a valiant attempt to assess the poem in the light of the poet's intentions and achievements, as explained in the foregoing pages. This book is highly commended.

CARLTON WILLIS.

*The Background of Modern Poetry*: J. Isaacs (Bell, 8s. 6d.).

THESE chapters were attractive as broadcast talks and achieve charm in their present form. Whether they matter, as serious criticism, is another thing. True they describe the Background of Mr. Eliot; re-conduct the reader through some literary experiences of the last forty years, touching on Georgianism, Symbolism, Imagism, Scientific Modernism, and the like; open doors on fascinating but unexplored corridors; and present the outline of an Apologia. Yet they ignore so much in the wider background that they cannot quite justify their title.

If it is desired to relate Modern Poetry to the whole range of English verse, it is not enough to draw comparisons between contemporary reviewers' attacks on Romantics or Moderns, or to consider Spenser's position against Eliot's. Before these chapters can have historical cogency, some reason must be found for the force of the Browning river and the desolation of the scented Tennyson swamp; some attempt must be made to connect the complicated present with Arnold, Swinburne and Meredith, to assess the place and value of Yeats, to work out map-references for Robert Graves and Walter de la Mare, as well as to show exactly why some poets, as Mr. Herbert Palmer says in his parody, *The Chaste Wand*, were "killed by Eliot, Pound, and the Three Blind Mice."

As they stand, these talks serve as dexterous supporters of the Eliot arms, tintured with a sinister Lifemanship. Interesting as they are, their arguments and presentation accurate, learned, and valuable, they do not go far enough. Nevertheless, they make a book to buy, to keep, and to refer to when refuting backward controversialists.

HUGH CREIGHTON HILL.



## HAZARD IN THE ANTIPODES

- A Book of Australian and New Zealand Verse*: edited by Walter Murdoch and Alan Mulgan (Oxford University Press.)  
*A Book of New Zealand Verse, 1923-1950*, chosen by Allen Curnow (Caxton Press, Christchurch, 21s. 0d).  
*The Blind Mountain*: Kendrick Smithyman (Caxton Press, 8s. 6d.).

IT is a pity that the Oxford Press, with its fine record of authoritative works, has thrown the shadow of its mantle upon such a book as the volume edited by Murdoch and Mulgan. Such a volume should not be held to represent us to the curious Englishman for some time to come, and the warning by one of the editors that personal liking was his guide can only reflect unfavourably on his ability to edit any anthology. The Oxford book is after history, perhaps even more that it is after poetry—the true feelings of pioneers—homesick, sentimental, mawkish even—but it is sanctioned by history. There are, of course, some good things in it, but such a lot of quaintness heaped together under the special licence granted colonialism.

The Curnow anthology first appeared in 1946, and was quickly recognized as the most important volume of verse we have had. It covered the period when new voices were first breaking through and our literary expression was coming of age. The editor's introduction lent to the work perhaps more cohesion and single purpose than, individually, it had, but nevertheless the theory seemed to arise out of the work, and gave our younger generation of poets some background against which to work. Some did this literally—against it.

The new issue of the book, with a buttering of additional poems, unfortunately betrays the editor. While his original work stands on its own, Curnow is sunk with his own theory, and the most significant work, of a completely different nature, that has been done in New Zealand over the past five years, is nowhere represented. How easily the editor could have heeded the reaction against his own earlier definitions, important now in that they caused a change of attitude in younger poets! Nevertheless, it is the Curnow anthology which will tell the Englishman more about our poetry than any other volume to date. Regardless of literary politics, the works of Charles Brasch, James K. Baxter, A. R. D. Fairburn, Denis Glover, J. R. Hervey and of Curnow himself, will stand among us and deserve honour.

It is certain that as the poetry of New Zealand moves from a preoccupation with place to a more mature consideration of person, so will the largely neglected talents of the Auckland poet, Kendrick Smithyman, begin to receive their just due from his countrymen.

Now, it is becoming apparent that there is a dividing line between the works of an older and a younger generation of poets in New Zealand, and it is likely that when the two (not diametrically) opposed groups settle down in a new and composite tradition, the iconoclastic and individualistic Mr. Smithyman will still be beyond the pale of whatever definitions and programmes may arise. But the exceptional poet is often the one to remark.

When most New Zealand poets were still savouring the neo-classicism of the 'thirties, Smithyman had moved into the primeval world of Dylan Thomas, passed over the fringe of Apocalypticism, and beat a retreat to a more solid core of the self.

*The Blind Mountain* brings together the poems written between 1945 and 1947 which will commend themselves at once to the discerning English reader, who will recognize the fusion of many comprehensible elements of the tradition, old and new, in a new, personal, and mainly successful manner. The poem *You Can't Get Away* reveals something of what I mean. It begins: "Amid my five great rearing senses," which seems to echo Thomas's "When all my five and country senses see" in a manner which yet recalls the Audenesque private joke. There is something of the private joker, the wit, in all of this; moving playfully and yet fiercely through the world. This may also explain part of Smithyman's unpopularity at home, where the poet who is known to say, as he does, "I will write to please myself," is rewarded by lack of recognition. Labelled "obscure," Smithyman has been fated to be overlooked by many New Zealanders who would, once exposed to him, discover that the greater part of *The Blind Mountain* was immediately accessible at a first reading. A one-time politically-conscious people may be stirred again by the message of *You Can't Get Away*, the pity of *Anzac Ceremony* or *The Hanging Judge*. Maybe their own emotions, wrenched by the lines of *The Weeping Face* or *Familiar Girl*, would move to deeper human relationships than our civilization, catering only for adolescences and senility in these South seas, has yet known or recognized. But this, too, may be expecting too much of poetry in an age where most of the ears that are not totally blocked lead only into a labyrinth of wood.

LOUIS JOHNSON (*New Zealand*).



*New Zealand Poetry Yearbook*, edited by Louis Johnson (Reed, Wellington, 10s. 6d.).

*The Sun Among the Ruins*: Louis Johnson (Pegasus Press, Christchurch).

NEW ZEALAND poetry is not a mushroom growth," insists Mr. Louis Johnson in the introduction to his *Poetry Yearbook*, "but something that is developing its own traditions and characteristics—something that is being shaped by many different hands in different ways. . . ." A few of these different ways are demonstrated in this anthology which the publishers hope to make an annual collection. Of the poets represented only Allen Curnow, Kendrick Smithyman and Johnson himself (being contributors to English magazines) will be known to more than a few readers in this country, so that the volume will serve a noteworthy purpose if only in bringing to our notice the work of such poets as Peter Alcock, Charles Brasch, Ruth Dallas, W. Hart-Smith, Basil Dowling and James K. Baxter. A new idea has been adopted, too—to give a closer view of recent New Zealand poetry the work of four poets (Hubert Witheford, Pat Wilson, W. H. Oliver and Charles Spear), chosen more or less at random, has been shown in greater detail in a separate section; though Mr. Erik Schwimmer's *Commentary* wastes valuable space to tell us that there have been important developments since Curnow's *Anthology of New Zealand Verse*, without saying exactly what these developments are.

To judge by the poems contained in his own book, *The Sun Among The Ruins*, Mr. Louis Johnson is one of the most exciting of these young poets of New Zealand; indeed, of young poets anywhere. His poetic creed—

"Let him be wild and irritate his skin  
With the disease of living—leaving his age  
Wailing its weals—licking its sores—and in  
His own miraculous journey know the real  
Under the skin and at the heart of feel."

may explain why he and other Commonwealth poets have so much to offer us in the way of vitality; but in such poems as *On the Road*, *Lines for a Maiden Lady*, *Pygmalion* and *Homage to Galatea*, he provides clear evidence that the vitality, in this instance at least, has not been gained at the expense of craftsmanship. Mr. Johnson's range is wide and his perception acute. *The Sun Among the Ruins* is a first book of distinction.

PAUL CAVENDISH.



*Poems and Satires*, 1951 : Robert Graves (Cassell, 7s. 6d.).  
*The Summer Bird* : Anne Ridler (Faber, 10s. 6d.).  
*Into Hades* : Andrew Young (Hart-Davies, 5s. 0d.).  
*One is One* : P. D. Cummins (Macmillan, 7s. 6d.).  
*Every Star a Tongue* : Margaret Willy (Heinemann, 8s. 6d.).  
*Late Days* : Maurice Willows (Backus, 2s. 6d.).  
*Scottish Verse 1851-1951* : edited by Douglas Young (Nelson, 18s.).

ALTHOUGH Mr. Robert Graves and Mrs. Anne Ridler are very different poets, in outlook, approach, and choice of subject, they have in common a real concern for craftsmanship, and share a recognition of the poet's responsibilities. If the twenty-nine pieces contained in *Poems and Satires*, 1951, do not always come off—largely because Mr. Graves is inclined to depend too much on the ideas expressed in his *The White Goddess*—they all have the polish we have learned to expect from this fastidious poet. The last item in Mrs. Ridler's collection is a long poem, *The Golden Bird*, which, as she points out, also depends upon its success "in making the diverse mythical traditions upon which it draws become domesticated into power," but it is in the lyrics that her talent for crystallizing experience is demonstrated at its best :

"And oyster-catchers, snatching the light,  
 Fly in a black-and-white cartoon before  
 The wind—these for the estuary, endless days  
 That silt in centuries against the shore."

*Into Hades*, a longish poem by Mr. Andrew Young, is a very interesting attempt to deal with life after death, the awakening to spiritual realities. Starting with the shock of finding himself, an unseen ghost, at his own funeral, the author leads us through a series of experiences becoming, as might be anticipated, more and more intangible. We can follow him to the point when he discovers that he is caught in the net of his own earth-memories ("A silk-worm, I had spun my own cocoon") and that the body he is still able to see and be aware of is merely something conjured up by his imagination—

"I looked again at my body;  
 it stared back with a strange impertinence,  
 familiar, hostile. It too was make-believe,  
 old use and wont, a fossilized memory,  
 fungoid outgrowth, expected, therefore seen."

but as he progresses on the spiritual plane we begin, somewhat

naturally, to lose contact, presumably still bogged in our earth memories.

Both Mrs. P. D. Cummins and Miss Margaret Willy have a strong religious element, but whereas the former expresses it through a sense of physical evil and violence, Miss Willy finds "God in water bird and tree," so that the poems in which she gives vent to her love of natural beauty are those in which her faith is most fittingly communicated. Her range, too, is wider than that of Mrs. Cummins and whether she is writing on Chaucer or Traherne, of the annunciation or the death of a young countryman, of peasants dancing or a picture in the National Gallery, she succeeds in pleasing. Mrs. Cummins, however, by confining her attention to a limited area of experience, gains in intensity and thoroughly explores her chosen ground.

*Late Days* is the first collection of poems by Mr. Maurice Willows and if, like most first books, it is rather uneven, it certainly proves striking evidence of this young poet's potentialities. Mr. Willows' chief fault is that he does not always fully assimilate his material before venturing to give utterance, but this is a youthful characteristic and against it should be set his vitality and freshness of vision. It is a welcome change to find a poet who, seeing the ruins around him, can yet believe in the resurgent powers of life :

"Then certainly, from forces small and infinite,  
Will spring forth life; stone breaking  
To hang above the wilderness like a cry;  
A single strange, red flower blooming."

That the last century has witnessed some remarkable developments in Scottish poetry is admirably brought out by the anthology edited by Douglas Young, with its concise but useful notes, its glossary (necessary to the English reader) and, not least important, its foreword by the editor. Mr. Young's object is to revive or stimulate "in a wide public the knowledge and pursuit of Scottish poetry" and in the 320 poems selected (in English, Lallans and Gaelic) he has covered the ground thoroughly. Robert Louis Stevenson, Edwin Muir, Hugh MacDiarmid, William Soutar, Somhairle Maclean, and Sydney Goodsir Smith are well represented, but only two short poems of W. S. Graham have been included, and when it comes to the work of the younger poets, Mr. Young seems to have experienced some difficulty in deciding between poems of quality and those of markedly Scottish tone or character.

MORTIMER STEELE.